

# MARRIAGE IN MOTION

## Transcript: Module 1, Lesson 4

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### LAURA

Hello and welcome back. It's really cool that you're continuing to be intentional about your marriage. We all know how easy it is to start something. But continuing is really the impressive part. We'll say it 100 times...The most successful marriages are the ones that move more like the tortoise than the hare. Slow and steady wins the race. Small wins, over time, building intimacy and partnership.

So how are you feeling about your progress so far? Are you aware of how far you've come?

Your awareness is critical to successfully completing this module.

This is the fourth lesson in Module One - which is all about personal responsibility and setting the context for your marriage journey.

To review, we started by getting you to simply begin. In lesson two, we wanted to orient you to the direction of your travels... away from divorce (or demise) and toward "better". Lesson three was all about moving toward a broader definition of intimacy.

Maybe you've noticed that most of what we've covered so far has been focused on you more than your relationship. You might be wondering why we did that...

Zach, why did we do that?

### ZACH

Good question. I'm glad you asked. Here's what I know for sure...no matter who comes into my practice... whether they're just asking for skills or they're a total trainwreck...if all I did was give them a bunch of tips and tactics and skills and strategies, they just wouldn't work. 'Tips' won't help until you change your mindset.

A really smart guy (Albert Einstein, actually) said "We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them."

In other words: The mindset and attitude you bring to your relationship creates a context. And if all you had was a big list of marriage tips, but your mindset and attitude remained the same... well, it takes more than a set of tips to create lasting transformation.

You need a foundation. You might call that foundation "wisdom" or "experience" or perhaps even "intention"

But more than intention, the foundation is "emotional intelligence".

For many, many years I was NOT emotional intelligent. Like, maybe 35 years...I had some of the raw materials, but I definitely wasn't refined. I might not yet be, but I'm way better than I was..

Oh jeez, I was a terrible husband, a terrible employee, a terrible friend. There was no shortage of people letting me know. You know how there are "big moments" that stick in your head forever? At least 3 of those are conversations I had with people about my lack of emotional intelligence.

One of my side gigs is coaching soccer. A handful of years ago, I had a team that had a ton of potential. We just couldn't over the hump. Turns out it was my fault. I had a parent pull me aside - clearly on assignment from the rest of the parents - to let me know that I was not "getting it". I'll never forget that conversation. Or the ones that followed. The one I had with a great boss who ultimately fired me. Or the one with my wife who ultimately didn't fire me.

Oh man, I have a ton of stories about how I just didn't get it. By "it", I mean "emotional intelligence".

## **LAURA**

That's an actual "thing" ... emotional intelligence. Maybe you've heard of it. Maybe you haven't. The idea of emotional intelligence became prominent in the late 90s when Daniel Goleman published his bestselling book. Later, Dr. Gottman introduced the idea of an emotionally intelligent marriage.

The correlation of those two ideas is unmistakable. This lesson is about the importance of personal emotional intelligence as a the key to an emotionally intelligent marriage. In this video, you'll learn:

1. The four competencies of emotional intelligence.
2. The conditions of an emotionally intelligent marriage.
3. The one skill you must master to raise your personal EQ.
4. The one skill you must master to raise the EQ of your relationship.
5. A special secret, just for the men in the room.
6. And, as always, we want you to become clear about your "next step".

The focus of this lesson is actually pretty simple. And it's 100% about emotional intelligence. Specifically...

Emotional Intelligence is the Key to a MARRIAGE in MOTION

## **ZACH**

Let's start by answering the question: What is emotional intelligence?

According to the Dictionary of Psychology, emotional intelligence (EQ) is the capacity of individuals to recognize their own, and other people's emotions, to discriminate between different feelings and label them appropriately, and to use emotional information to guide thinking and behavior.

Let's break that down. Emotional intelligence is your ability to recognize, understand and respond appropriately to emotions... both yours and others.

The connection to marriage should be obvious. If it's not, we have some work to do. You see, happily married couples -- couples who've been married for years and still say they're in love -- they aren't necessarily richer, or healthier, or more beautiful or successful. They're not more compatible or less distracted. They don't have less conflict.

They're simply more attuned to one another. They go out of their way to stay connected. They prioritize re-

spect and empathy and honor for one another and for their relationship. They actually work on developing emotional intelligence on behalf of the marriage. This is where their happiness comes from.

So, how do you do it? How do you develop emotional intelligence? I've been trying to answer this question for twenty years. Again, without irony or shame, I can tell you: All of my best stories about emotional intelligence are about how I totally mucked it up. Seriously, somehow, on the night I met my wife, she fell in love with me and all I wanted to do that night was go home and call the girl I was dating at the time and tell her about this new cool chick I'd met.

## **LAURA**

Yeesh. I suppose, if I'm honest, I have my own version of that story but for now let's focus on the actual thing: Emotional intelligence has four elements.

The first is self-awareness - This is your ability to understand and check in with your own emotional state. Not just the first and most obvious emotions (happy, sad, angry), but the more textured ones as well (excited, nostalgic, embarrassed). Just for kicks... check in with yourself right now. What are you feeling... really feeling. It's so easy to default to impulse, but emotional intelligence is really about taking the time to check in with your actual feelings in real time.

The second aspect of emotional intelligence is self-management, assuming you're aware of your emotions, Are you? This is actually pretty simple: Are you able to draw a straight line between your awareness and your action?

## **ZACH**

Ok. Since you asked...here's the story of how I mucked up the night I met Rebecca. I was 22 and a long way away from any version of self-awareness and self-management. Reb and I met at a conference and after working late into the night, we started talking, then walking, then driving. I played her some cool romantic songs, and eventually walked her back to her room under the moonlight. She went home that night and wrote in her journal about how she wished I would become her husband. (That journal entry is currently hanging on the wall in our bedroom.) Like I said, when I got home from my conference, I called my girlfriend and told her about this cool chick I'd met. I was not self aware and therefore could not have self managed. If I'd had any clue at all, I would have either not engaged Rebecca at all, or I'd have understood that my engagement had real impact. Reb gave me plenty of clues of my impact, but I totally missed them.

Emotionally intelligent people have a capacity for both self awareness and self management. Emotional intelligence also includes an other awareness. This is the ability to pick up on and understand the emotions in other people. A skill I clearly lacked. This skill requires an intentional shift of your attention from yourself to the other... for our purposes your spouse.

The last piece of emotional intelligence is relationship management.

Look....I definitely get it. Relationships are a hard. If "hard" isn't the right word, they're certainly complex. The healthiest relationships exist between two people committed to increasing their emotional intelligence. It's not enough to be competent in just one or two or three areas.

Are you committed to being competent in all four aspects of an emotionally intelligent marriage?

I ask because, here's a secret. A LOT of what we're doing in MARRIAGE in MOTION is to help build your emotional intelligence. If you go through the next three modules, and do the homework, you will be more emotionally intelligent. We promise. But for right now, we want to help you build one essential, core, emotional

skill. The one skill you must master to raise your personal EQ.

The good news about emotional intelligence is that you can actively raise your “score”. It’s different than IQ which stays the same throughout your life. I’ve taken EQ tests a half a dozen times since I graduated from college. I can happily report that my scores have risen steadily through the years. I’m not sure what that says about my youth, but nonetheless.

Time and experience will serve to help raise your scores. Also accountability. I’m fortunate to be married to a woman who wouldn’t tolerate an immature partner. We also have two fully aware daughters who have raised the bar quite a bit for me.

## **LAURA**

So here is the one skill that you can focus on developing now:: It’s EMPATHY. Empathy is your ability to appreciate another point of view...even if you don’t agree with it.

It’s actually a fun thing to work on. Here’s a fun exercise. The next time you’re watching a television show, turn it on mute and see if you can interpret the emotions and motivations of the characters on screen. This is you practicing empathy... putting yourself in their shoes... in this case, paying attention to non-verbals to gain awareness of someone else’s feelings.

Another practice is to literally try to put yourself into your partner’s perspective. Assuming they’re a good, smart, loving person, why would they make the choices that they make? Sometimes, I actively go through this imagination process when I cannot understand a decision that Ryan has made. I’m not always, right, but I’m getting better at tolerating and understanding his points of view.

The point is, you can train your brain to develop an empathetic approach. It begins with self awareness and then an active commitment to understanding the points of view that exist outside this point of view. This goes a long way toward relationship management.

## **ZACH**

When it comes to relationship management, there is one skill that you must master to raise the EQ of your relationship and to stay connected to your partner in a meaningful way. That skill is called repair.

Imagine snow skiing: Need to keep the skis paired.

Dr. Gottman describes repair as “any statement or action - silly or otherwise - that prevents negativity from escalating out of control.” He says, “Repair attempts are the secret weapon of emotionally intelligent couples - even though many of these couples aren’t aware that they are doing something so powerful.”

We’ll talk about repair a lot more in the next module but for now, it’s important to understand two main factors in this “secret”. It’s important that you make repair attempts. That you have a library of repairs - big and small - that can de-escalate (or regulate) your conflict. It could be a word or a phrase or a wink and a nod... anything that helps you stay connected.

The second piece of repair is that it’s important that you allow repair attempts to succeed. That’s part of the forBetter and for worse contract. It’s important to be allowed and when attempts succeed, it builds trust back into the relationship.

Finally, I want to share a special secret, just for the men in the room, though it will be good for the ladies to hear as well. It’s not really a secret that a LOT of men (not all, but a lot) are typically less emotional if not less

emotionally astute than women.

As we talked about in the last lesson, women in the 21st century are rightfully getting more accustomed to having partners that are more than providers and leaders...they want and deserve men who are aware and present. They want emotionally intelligent husbands.

According to Dr. Gottman, emotionally intelligent husbands have cracked the code by learning how to convey honor and respect to their wives. Those two words 'honor' and 'respect' are almost cliches in the realm of marriage literature, which may mean that they've lost some of their meaning, but we know honor and respect when we see it. We also know dishonor and disrespect when we see it.

### **LAURA**

Honoring your partner is to recognize and lift her up. To give special acknowledgement. To lift up above the rest. And we know the opposite of honor... it's one of the four horsemen: Contempt. Respect is a way of treating or thinking about someone, with admiration. It is to regard and care for who they are.

One way to show honor and respect is to be open to learning more about her emotions. Let her lead. Lift her up and allow her to influence you. Actively, verbally, praise your partner. This does not mean that you have to lay down and allow them to walk all over you. But it does mean that you should prioritize your study of empathy and repair. It's the secret to emotional intelligence and to a happier, healthier relationship.

### **LAURA**

Here at the end of Module One, there are lots of next steps you can take. Start by revisiting the first question of this lesson: How are you feeling about your progress so far? Are you aware of how far you've come so far? Let's know in the comments and we'll do our best to respond.

Also, we want you to get serious about having an emotionally intelligent relationship. As a reminder, there are four competencies to emotional intelligence: self awareness, self management, other awareness and relationship management.

For now, practice "other awareness" by testing how accurate you are at reading and understanding your partner's emotions.

In the activity sheet titled "Emotional Intelligence" you will find an activity for you to do with your partner. Remember that this exercise is simply intended to help expand your other awareness. You may not KNOW when your partner is feeling - for example - overwhelmed unless they tell you and that's okay. In this case, simply ask "how will I know when you are feeling overwhelmed? What will it look like? What will you be doing?"

Once you finish the activity sheet, you're done with Module One. What are your main insights? What's been the most helpful? Tell us in the comments section. And most importantly -- what's next for you and your relationship?

So, congratulations on getting this far! Next up, in Module 2, we're heading into conflict and conflict management.

In the meantime, Keep on keeping on. You're doing something incredibly important. Keep pushing toward a relationship that is for Better.

We'll be waiting for you in the next module.